THE FIVE SACRED TREES
Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra

As we become increasingly aware of the damage done by the destruction of our forests, it is illuminating to discover that our ancestors, many thousands of years ago, prayed to the spirits before felling a tree. One prayer was appropriate for a maple, another for the elm, the ash and so on.

The English poet, Robert Graves, writes of these prayers, which I have been unable to find but which, nonetheless, have moved me to compose this music about trees featuring the bassoon, itself a tree.

This is all the result of a request for a concerto by the great bassoonist Judith Le Clair, whose unparalleled artistry is a mystery and a wonder in itself.

I

Eó Mugna, the great oak, whose roots extend to Connla's Well in the "otherworld," stands guard over what is the source of the River Shannon and the font of all wisdom. The well is probably the source of all music, too. The inspiration for this movement is the Irish Uilleann pipe, a distant ancestor of the bassoon, whose music evokes the spirit of Mugna and the sacred well.

II

Tortan is a tree that has been associated with witches and as a result, the fiddle appears, sawing away, as it is conjoined with the music of the bassoon. The Irish Bodhrán drum assists.

III

The ***Tree of Ross*** (or ***Eó Rossa)*** is a yew, and although the yew is often referred to as a symbol of death and destruction, the Tree of Ross is the subject of much rhapsodizing in the literature. It is referred to as "a mother's good," "Diadem of angels" and "faggot of the sages". Hence, the lyrical character of this movement, wherein the bassoon incants and is accompanied by the harp!

IV

Craeb Uisnig is an ash and has been described by Robert Graves as a source of strife. Thus, a ghostly battle, where all that is heard as the phantoms struggle, is the snapping of twigs on the forest floor.

V

Dathi, which purportedly exercised authority over the Poets, and was the last tree to fall, is the subject for the close of the piece. The bassoon soliloquizes as it ponders the secrets of the Trees.

John Williams

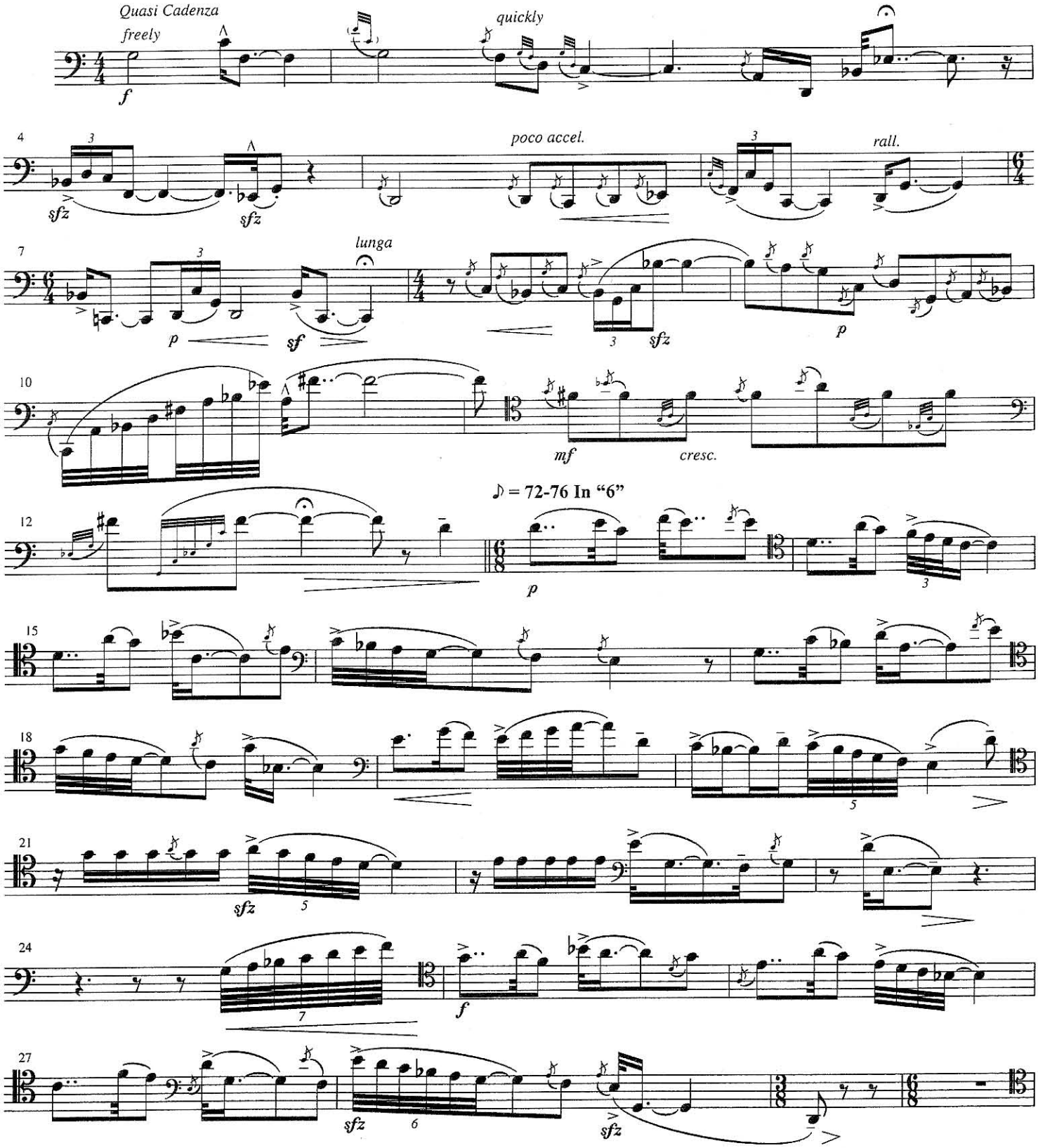
THE FIVE SACRED TREES

Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra

(for Judith Le Clair)

SOLO BASSOON

JOHN WILLIAMS

I. Eó Mugna

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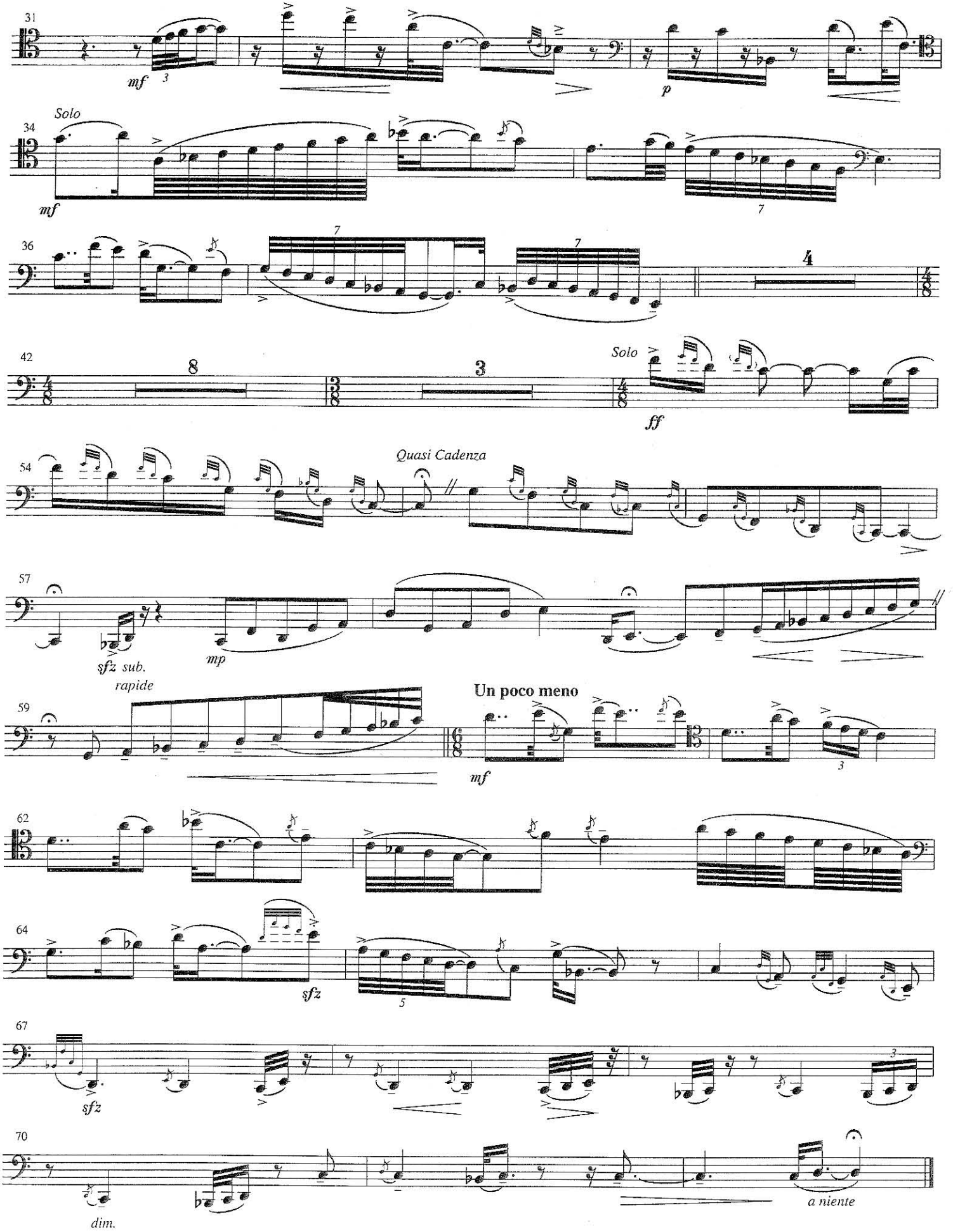
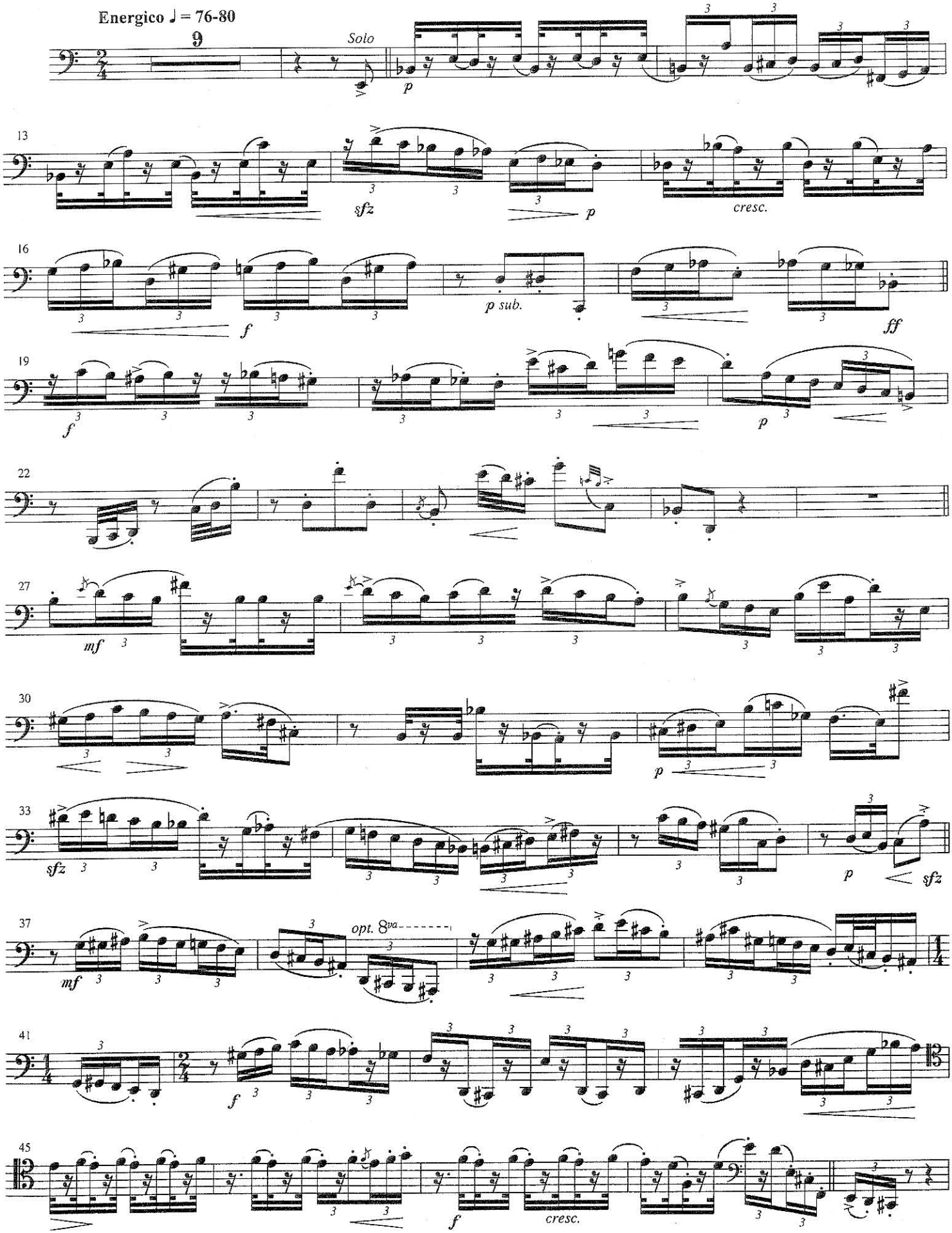
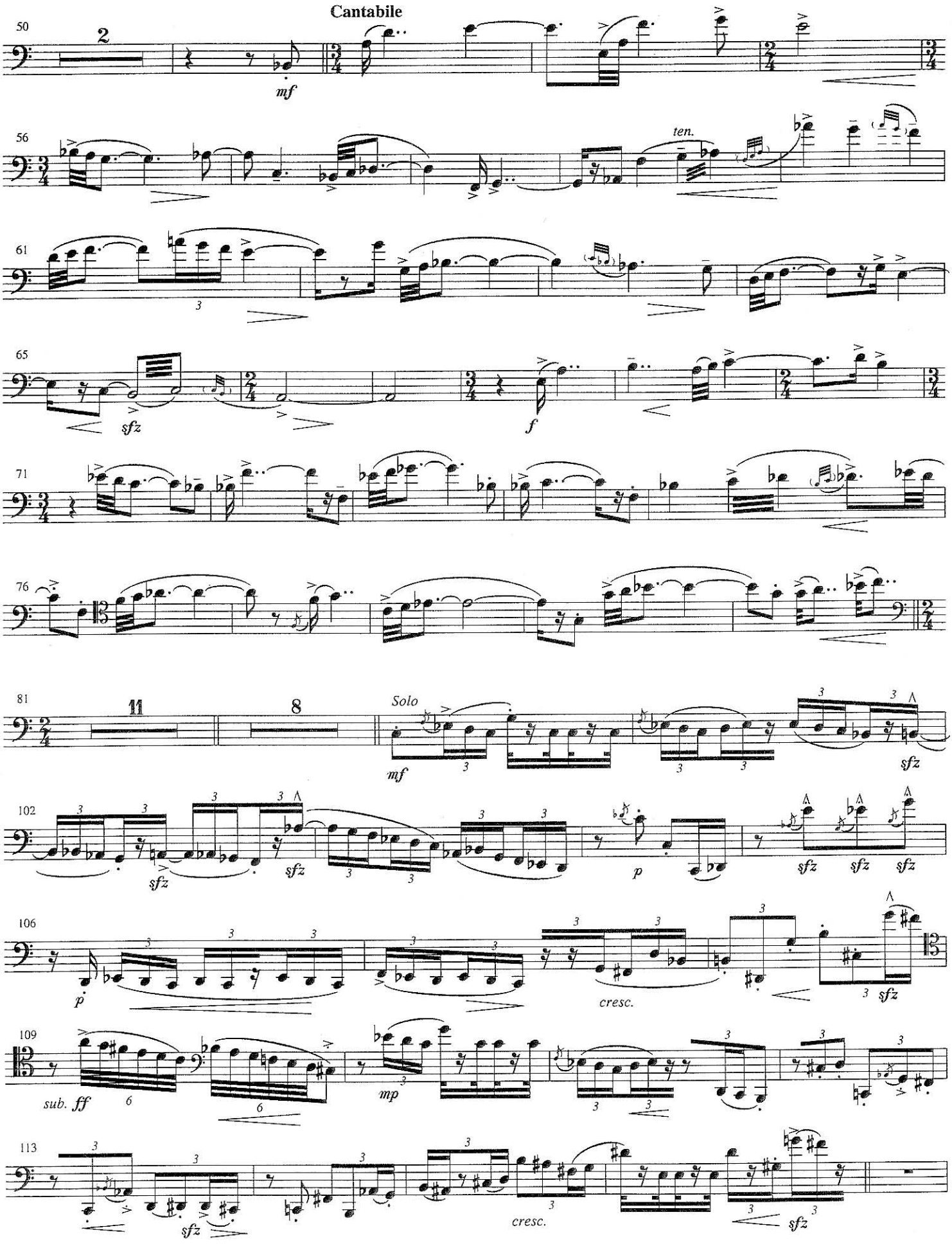
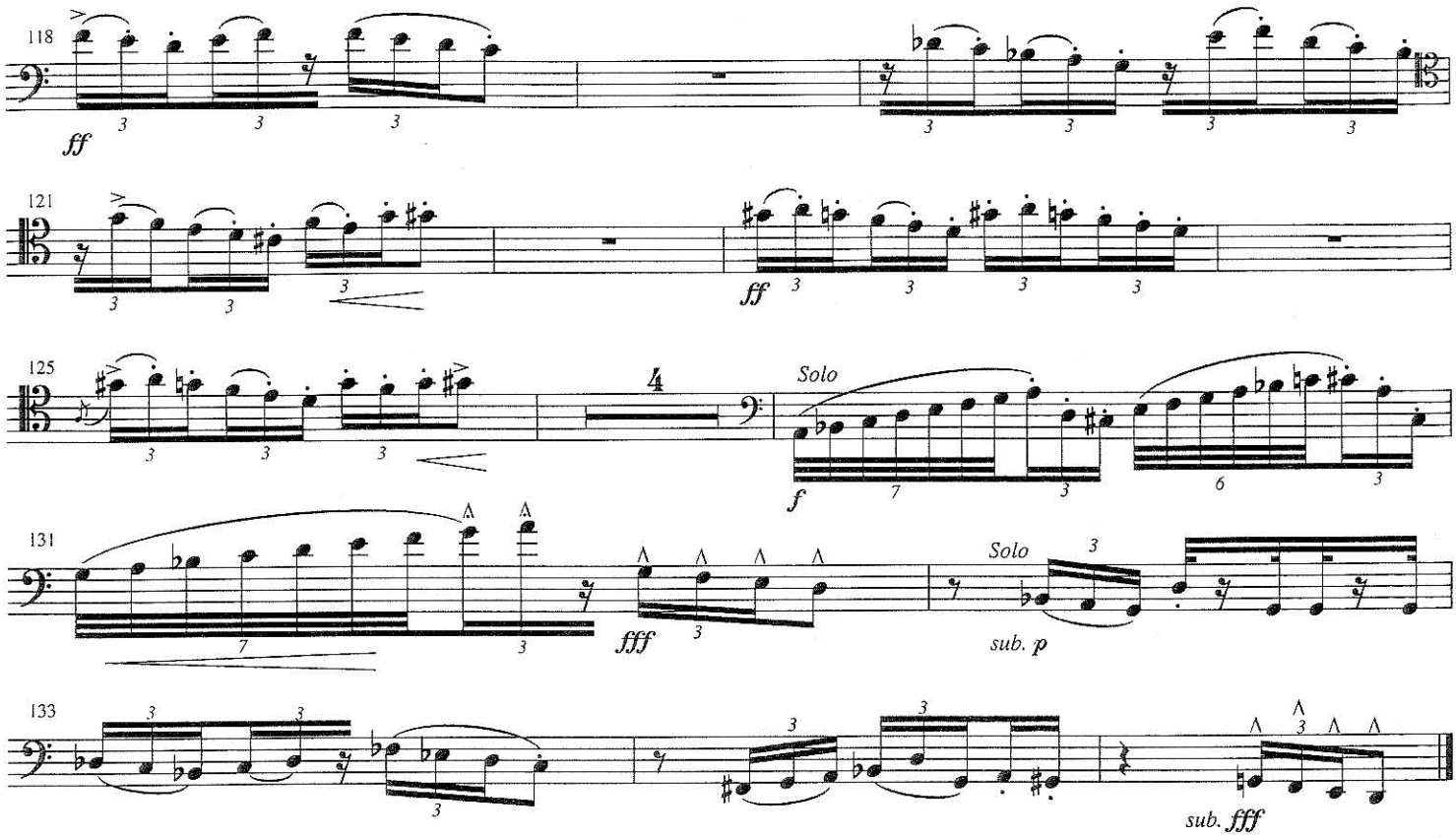
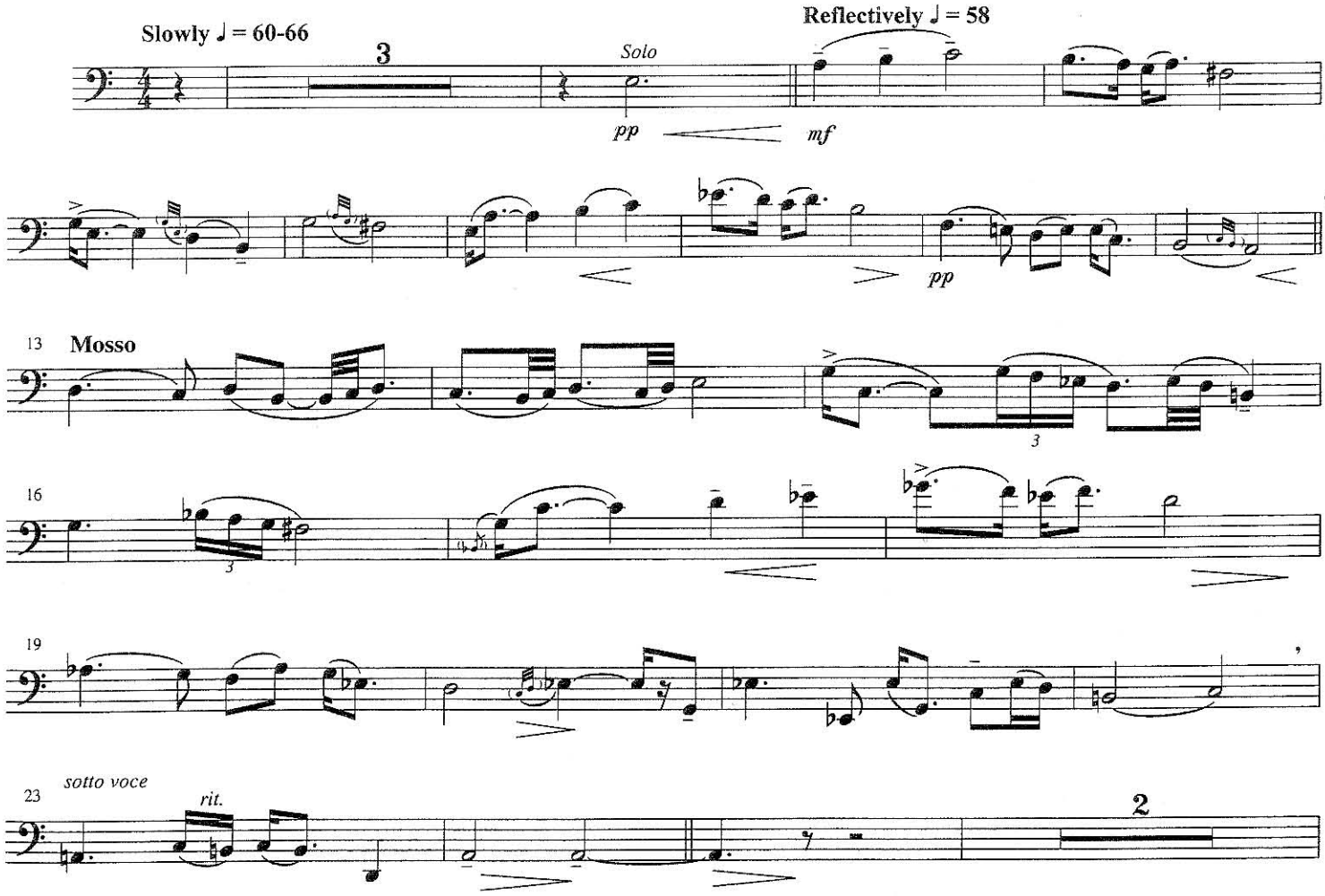
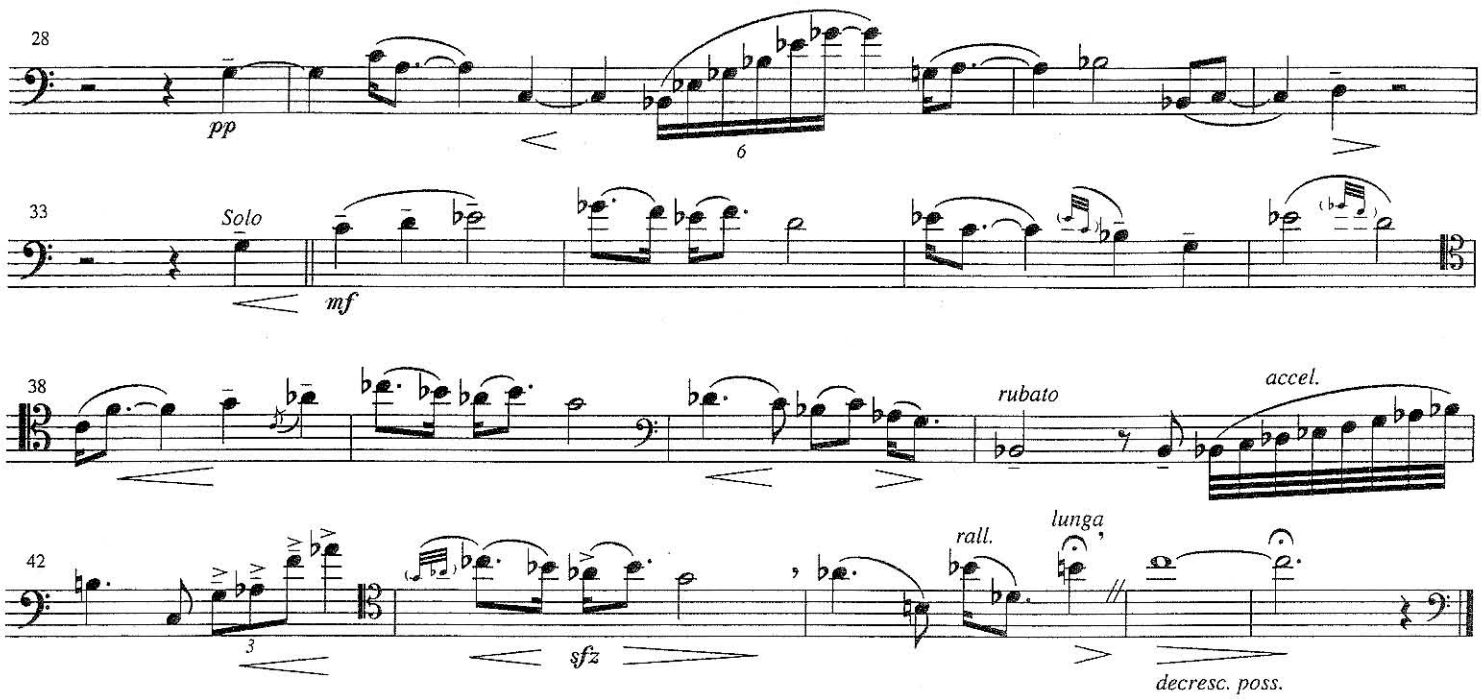
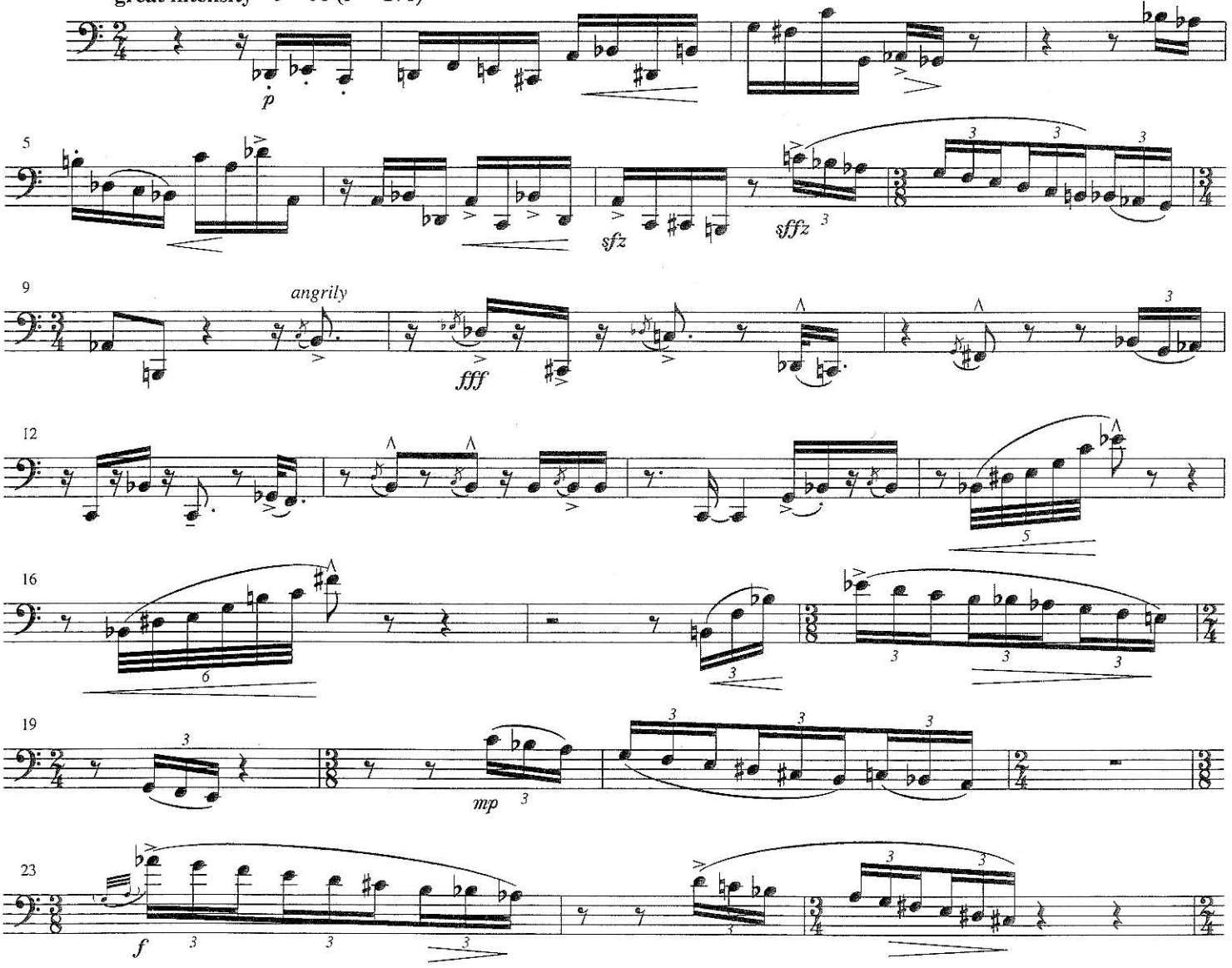
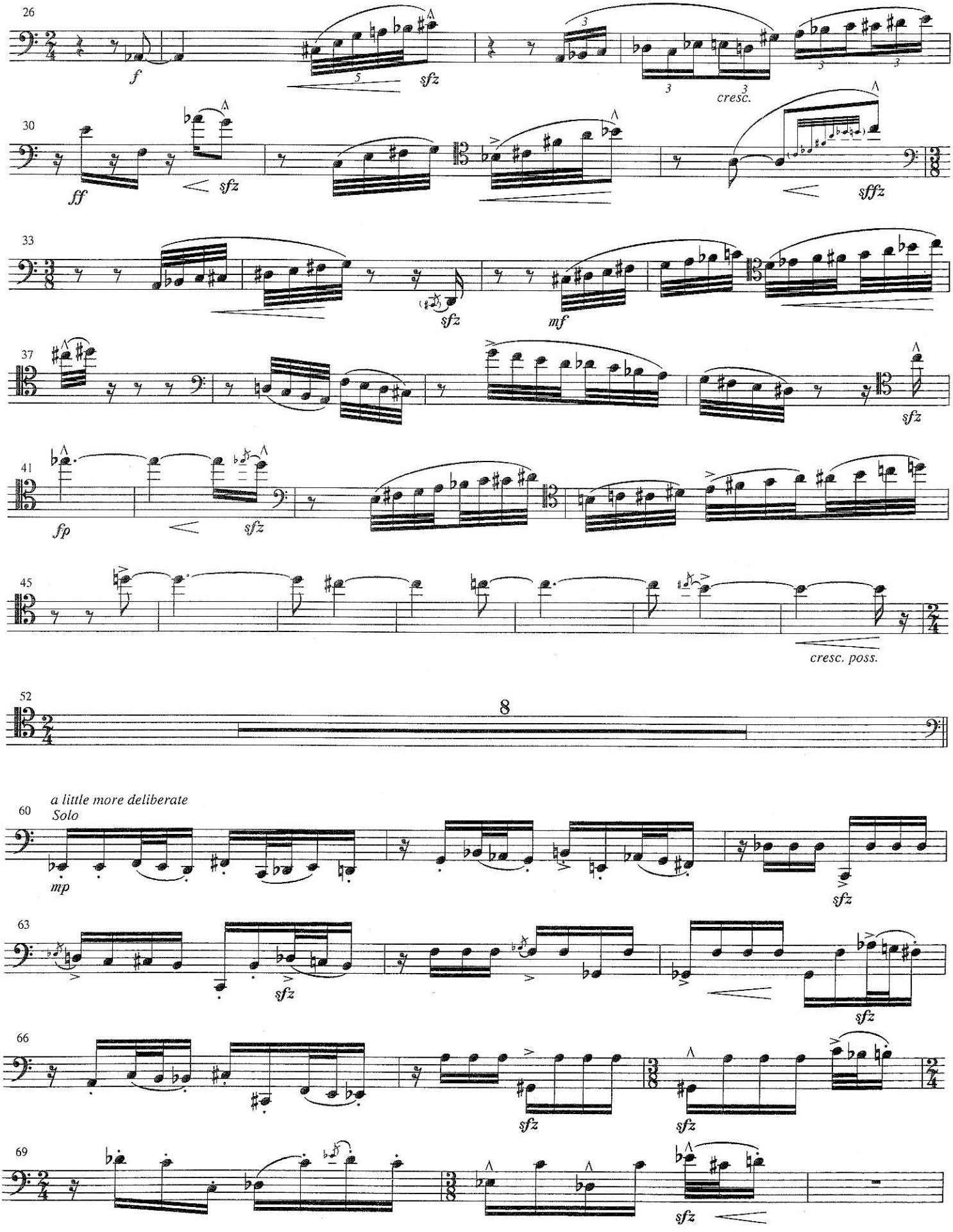
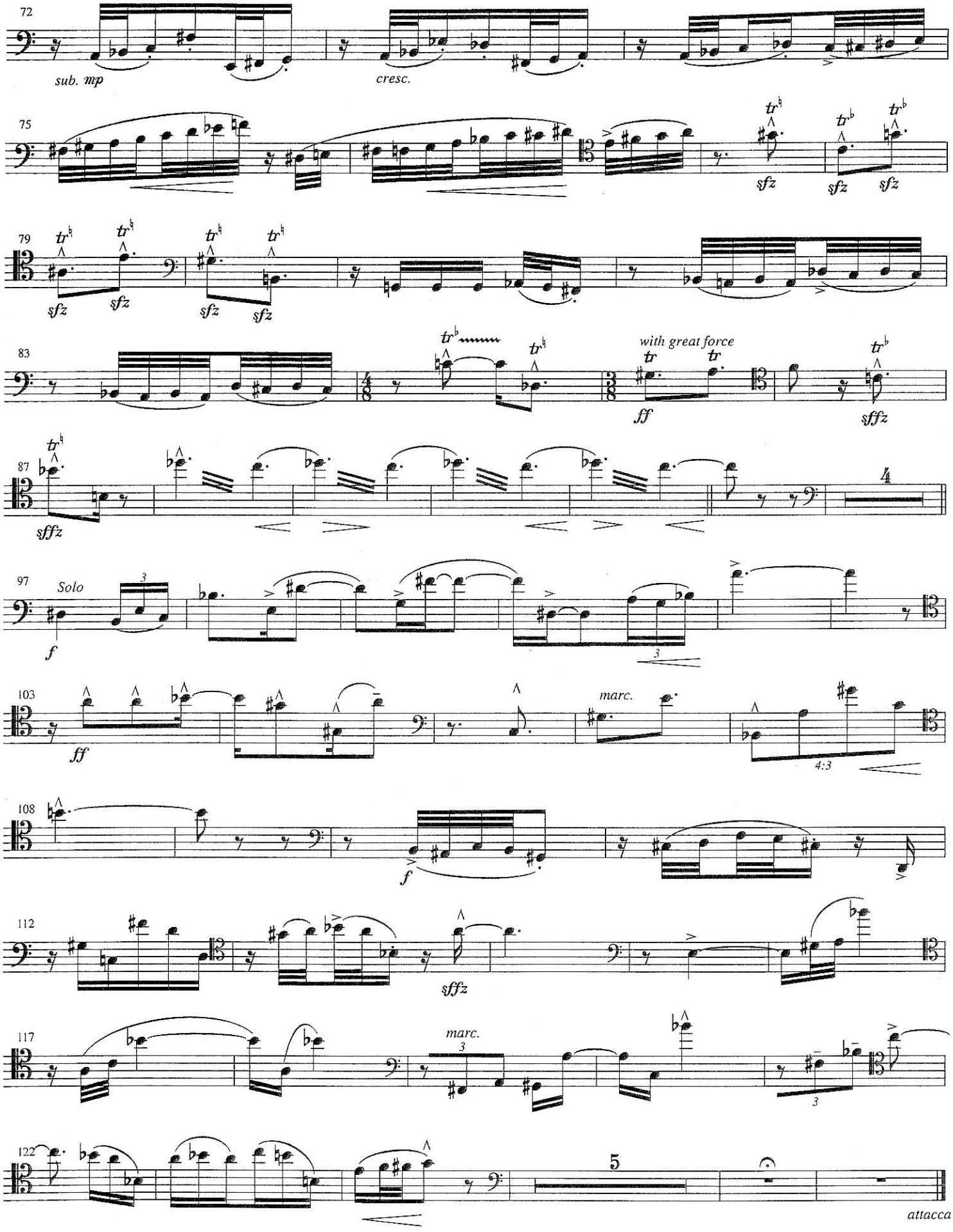

31
mf
3
p
Solo
34
mf
7
36
7
7
4
42
8
3
Solo
ff
Quasi Cadenza
54
57
sfz sub.
rapide
mp
59
Un poco meno
mf
3
62
64
sfz
5
67
sfz
3
70
dim.
a niente

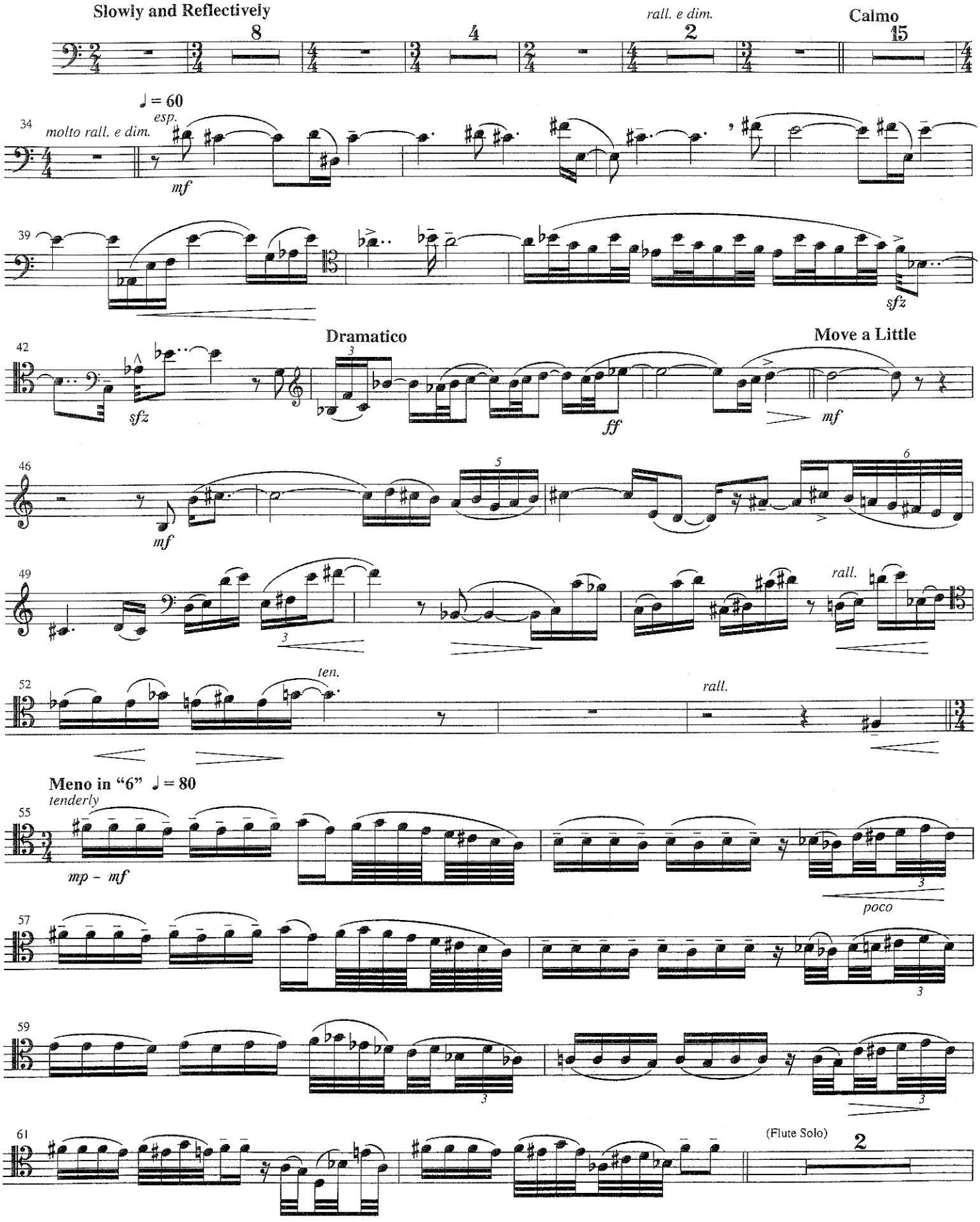
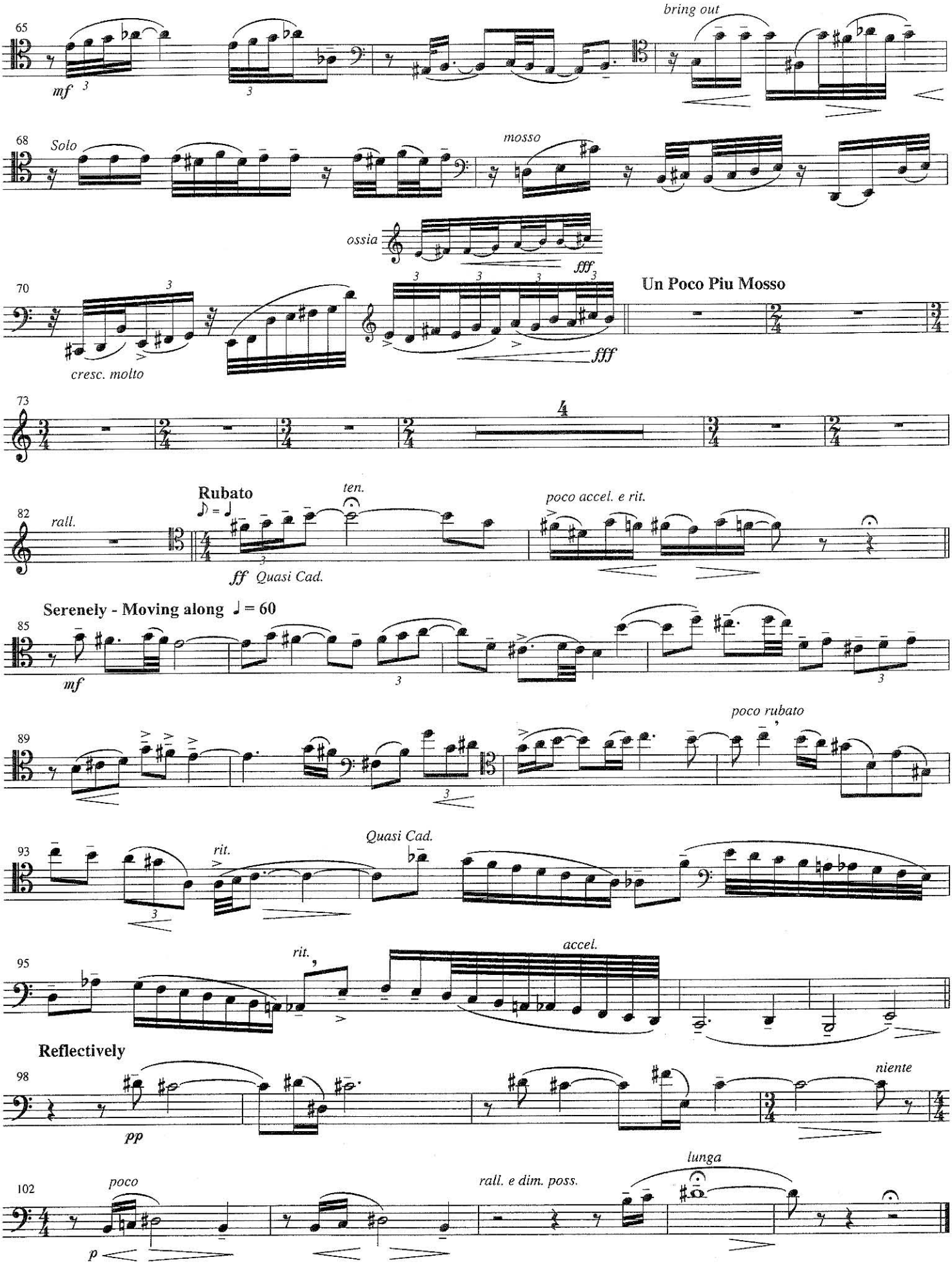
II. Tortan

Energico ♩ = 76-80
9
Solo
p
13
sfz
p
cresc.
16
f
p sub.
ff
19
f
p
22
27
mf
30
p
33
sfz
p
sfz
37
mf
opt. 8va
41
f
45
f
cresc.

Cantabile
50
2
mf
56
ten.
61
3
65
sfz
f
71
76
81
11
8
Solo
mf
sfz
102
sfz
sfz
p
sfz
sfz
sfz
106
p
cresc.
sfz
109
sub. ff
6
6
mp
113
sfz
cresc.
sfz

118
ff
121
ff
125
4
Solo
f
131
fff
Solo
sub. p
133
sub. fff

III. Eó Rossa

Slowly ♩ = 60-66
3
Solo
pp
Reflectively ♩ = 58
mf
pp
13 Mosso
16
19
23 sotto voce
rit.
2



IV. Craeb Uisnig

Quietly, but with great intensity ♩ = 88 (♪ = 176)

26
f
sfz
cresc.
30
ff
sfz
sffz
33
sfz
mf
37
sfz
41
fp
sfz
45
cresc. poss.
52
8
60
a little more deliberate
Solo
mp
sfz
63
sfz
sfz
66
sfz
sfz
69
sfz

72
sub. mp
cresc.
75
sfz
79
sfz
83
with great force
ff
sffz
87
sffz
4
97
Solo
f
3
103
ff
marc.
4:3
108
f
112
sffz
117
marc.
3
122
5
attacca

V. Dathi

Slowly and Reflectively
8
4
rall. e dim.
2
Calmo
15
♩ = 60
esp.
34
molto rall. e dim.
mf
39
sfz
42
Dramatico
Move a Little
sfz
ff
mf
46
mf
49
rall.
52
ten.
rall.
Meno in "6" ♩ = 80
tenderly
55
mp - mf
poco
57
59
61
(Flute Solo)
2

65
mf
bring out
68
Solo
mosso
ossia
fff
70
cresc. molto
Un Poco Piu Mosso
fff
73
82
rall.
Rubato
ten.
ff Quasi Cad.
poco accel. e rit.
Serenely - Moving along ♩ = 60
85
mf
89
poco rubato
93
rit.
Quasi Cad.
95
rit.
accel.
Reflectively
98
pp
niente
102
poco
p
rall. e dim. poss.
lunga